

News briefs

■ The Prime Minister arrived home on May 14 after a nine-day trip to Iceland, Britain and France. In London at the economic summit conference, Mr. Trudeau agreed, with the leaders of six other industrial nations, to begin a two-month study aimed at finding out whether nuclear energy resources can be expanded without risking an increase in the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Summit leaders also approved the idea of a new international monetary fund to provide money for countries needing help to overcome deficits in their balance of payments. At the two-day North Atlantic Treaty Organization meeting also in London, Mr. Trudeau said it was important that the citizens of NATO's 15 member countries — especially the young — were convinced of the importance of NATO if it were to retain its strength. He reaffirmed his Government's commitment to the alliance, noting Canada's major review of defence policy in 1969. Canada is spending \$1 billion to buy long-range patrol planes, not just for Canadian territory but also for allied defence in the Atlantic. In Paris, where he met with President Giscard d'Estaing and Prime Minister Raymond Barre, Mr. Trudeau discussed Canada/France relations, Canada's participation in the European Common Market, economic matters and the possibilities of French investment in Canada.

■ Gasoline and home-heating oil prices will probably rise more than three cents a gallon every six months for the next two years, said Energy Minister Alastair Gillespie on May 11. Despite strong opposition from Ontario, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia, the other seven provinces have agreed to raise domestic crude oil prices to \$2 a barrel this year.

■ Wage and price controls will remain in effect until October 14, exactly two years from the date they were imposed, unless business and labour agree on voluntary restraints, Finance Minister Donald Macdonald says.

■ The consumer price index rose at an accelerated 12 percent annual rate during the first three months of 1977, but economists generally expect a slowdown in inflation for the rest of the year. The faster first quarter inflation rate, which was almost double the 6.8 percent annual rate recorded in the fourth quarter of 1976, was mainly the result of rising coffee, tea, fruit, vegetable and petroleum prices. But government economists continue to be optimistic that the rate of consumer price increase for 1977 as a whole will moderate from the 7.5 percent gain in 1976.

■ Canada's gross national product in current dollar terms reached a level of \$184.5 billion last year, up 14.5 per cent from that of 1975. In terms of real growth (discounting price increases), real GNP in 1976 was 4.6 percent higher than it was in the previous year. It is estimated that GNP will reach \$209 billion this year, an increase of 11.5 per cent. Some 4 per cent is expected to be real growth, and 7.5 per cent accounted for by higher prices.

■ Average family incomes adjusted to remove the effects of inflation rose by about 180 per cent between 1951 and 1975, says R.A. Wallace, assistant chief statistician responsible for census and household surveys at Statistics Canada. The average rose from \$7,400 in 1951 to \$9,300 in 1961 and to \$13,573 in 1975 and, if growth continues at a steady pace, it should be over \$20,000 in 1975 dollars by 1981.

■ Labour productivity in Canada rose 5.1 per cent last year, its biggest annual gain since 1973.

■ Artificial asbestos ashes used with decorative fireplace sets will be banned within the next few months, a Consumer and Corporate Affairs Department official said recently. Some new proposals under the Hazardous Products Act would ban the sale of any product containing loose asbestos. Intake of asbestos fibres into lungs has been associated with lung cancer.

■ Manitoba Finance Minister Saul Miller said last month that the province had sold a public issue amounting to 80 million Swiss Francs — about

\$33 million in Canadian funds — in Zurich at the "particularly good" interest rate of 5½ per cent. He said the issue, dated May 12, 1977, was for a full 15-year period, "which makes the interest rate even more satisfactory." These 15-year bonds are callable at the option of the province after five years at declining premiums.

■ The Canada Environmental Protection Service has undertaken a five-year \$7 million technology program to develop oil spill countermeasures for Arctic waters, Fisheries and Environment Minister Roméo LeBlanc announced recently.

■ Fifteen Canadian universities have been given \$375,000 in northern science training grants by the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. The northern science training grants program, which began in 1962, encourages the training of northern scientists. More than \$3 million has been given to universities since the program began.

■ All assets acquired during marriage would be considered the joint property of both spouses in the event of marriage breakdown, under terms of the proposed Marital Property Act introduced into the Manitoba Legislature by Attorney General Howard Pawley. Mr. Pawley said family assets, such as the marital home, furniture, the family car and all other non-commercial assets, would be considered the joint property of both spouses immediately upon acquisition. Commercial assets, on the other hand — such as businesses and investments — would not be accounted or "equalized" until there was a separation, divorce or a court determined that one spouse was dissipating these commercial assets. The purpose of this provision, he said, was to prevent an encroachment on the normal business dealings of either spouse.

■ The tourism departments of New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island are participating with seven major petroleum companies and their dealers in a pilot program to promote clean and well stocked washrooms on highways throughout Atlantic Canada. To date, 202 service station dealers, who have applied for participation in the "we care" program agree with provincial tourism departments that service station facilities will be kept clean, sanitary and functional at all times.

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